

REMARKS

Claims 1-137 are now present in this application, with new claims 94-137 being added by the present Amendment. New independent claims 94 and 110 have been added. Claims 1, 22, 36, 45, 52, 61, 71, 94, and 110 are the independent claims present in the application.

Several of the claims of the application have been amended. These amendments have been made to correct minor informalities, to broaden the claims, or in other non-narrowing ways. The amendments were not made to overcome any prior art, for any reason related to patentability nor for any other statutory considerations. Entry of these amendments is respectfully requested.

Information Disclosure Statements / Further Consideration Requested

Initially, Applicants wish to thank the Examiner for consideration of the documents submitted in connection with the Information Disclosure Statements of October 3, 2002; June 3, 2003; and June 23, 2003. However, Applicants further request consideration of the documents filed with the Information Disclosure Statements of January 11, 2002, August 27, 2003, and October 10, 2003 (recognizing that the October 10, 2003 IDS was filed subsequent to the issuance of a first Office Action in connection with the present application). Applicants include herewith copies of the PTO-1449 forms for each of the Information Disclosure Statements of January 11, 2002; August 27, 2003; and October 10, 2003. Applicants respectfully request the Examiner to initial and return the enclosed PTO-1449 forms, acknowledging the Examiner's consideration of each of the documents submitted in the aforementioned Information Disclosure Statements.

Objection to the Specification

Initially, the Examiner objects to the Title of the invention as not being descriptive. Accordingly, by the present Amendment, Applicants have submitted a new Title which is believed to be a more clearly indicative of the present invention. Withdrawal of this rejection and acceptance of this new Title is respectfully requested.

Drawings

Applicants acknowledge the Examiner's acceptance of the Drawings filed on September 26, 2001. Accordingly, no further action need be taken in connection with the Drawings.

Discussion of an Embodiment of the Present Application

For the Examiner's benefit, an exemplary illustration of one embodiment of the application will be discussed. The claims are not limited to this embodiment.

The present application, in one embodiment, is directed to a search system and method involving users and providers associated with at least one beneficiary group. In the past, users, such as consumers for example, would often search for and seek out small local "mom and pop" stores of their local community for purchasing a good, service or information. By buying from the local mom and pop stores, they would be helping various members of their community to become successful. Today, however, a seller's willingness to sell large volumes of goods, services or information at relatively low prices, and a buyer's desire to purchase goods, services or information at the lowest prices, tends to drive buyers away from these local "mom and pop" stores to purchase from large regional, national, or even multi-national retail outlets. Accordingly, Applicants have discovered a need and indeed a solution to balance a buyer's desire to purchase goods, services and/or information at relatively low prices, with a desire to

maintain links to groups that they would like to benefit.

Accordingly, in one embodiment, the present application is directed to a search method and/or system which permits a user to associate himself or herself with at least one of a plurality of beneficiary groups. A beneficiary group, based upon its common and ordinary meaning, includes any group or entity that may benefit in some way from something. This can be a direct or indirect benefit and can include, as one non-limiting example, a particular community or church group for example (such as the Korean Methodist Church), any group or entity which the user chooses to benefit, etc. (Note that the user may or may not be a part of a beneficiary group, but the user himself cannot be the entire group. As one non-limiting example, the user can choose to benefit the Boy Scouts of America, and may or may not be a Boy Scout).

Some non-limiting examples of beneficiary groups are discussed throughout the present application. These can include at least one pre-designated group or entity; and/or at least one user-specified, user-designated or user-preferred group or entity which a user desires to benefit, but with which the user may or may not have any previous association, affiliation or designation (for example, a third party individual that the user desires to benefit through some type of contributory plan or entity, or a group such as the Boy Scouts of America for which the user may have no contact, association or affiliation therewith).

Thus, through many different ways, a user may associate him or herself with at least one of a plurality of beneficiary groups. Thereafter, the system and/or method, in one embodiment of the present application, can provide an arrangement to the user for searching for a provider based upon a search request input to a computer device. Instead of merely searching for any provider, the arrangement can provide for searching for a provider who is also associated with a beneficiary group associated with, and/or merely specified by, the user. As such, a search system

and/or method is established by an embodiment of the present application, wherein a user and a provider are associated based on their common (but perhaps otherwise not communicated) desire to associate with a common beneficiary group. As such, the user can develop, for example, an arrangement for obtaining at least one of a goods, service, or other information from a particular provider, namely one which is also associated with a beneficiary group associated with the user.

One non-limiting example of this is discussed in connection within the body of the present application, wherein a user desires to associate himself with the Korean Methodist Church. In this non-limiting example, the user is desirous of buying a product (a digital camera for example), but wants to buy this camera from someone associated with the Korean Methodist Church. Through a search method of an embodiment of the present application, a user of the computer can associate himself with a beneficiary group such as the Korean Methodist Church, and then an arrangement for searching can be provided to allow the user search for a provider, based upon a search request inputted into the device including the request to buy from someone selling digital cameras, wherein the provider is also someone associated with the Korean Methodist Church (a member of the Korean Methodist Church, someone who is pre-registered and has agreed to benefit the Korean Methodist Church in some way, someone who has some type of association with the Korean Methodist Church, etc.).

As such, the user can self-affiliate, self-associate, or self-designate himself with a beneficiary group; and/or be pre-associated, pre-affiliated or pre-designated with a beneficiary group. Further, the provider can also self-affiliate or self-associate himself with a beneficiary group. Finally, the beneficiary group can be benefited by an arrangement which allows a user to search for a provider associated with the common beneficiary group.

Prior Art Rejections

The Examiner has rejected claims 1-93 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by Dunworth et al. (U.S. Patent No. 5, 930, 474). This rejection is respectfully traversed.

Dunworth et al. is directed to an Internet organizer for accessing geographically and topically based information. Dunworth et al. includes a system with a view-point map which includes a visibly displayed map of a selected geographical area or text information which pertains to the resources associated with a selected geographic area. The geography database allows the users to browse through different geographic areas which are ordered hierarchically; a local content database includes information about general goods and services available within a given geographic location; and a yellow pages database includes information about specific goods and services in the geographic location.

Applicants respectfully submit that Dunworth et al. fails to teach or suggest, and indeed has nothing to do with “a beneficiary group” as claimed in claim 1 for example, let alone “at least one provider being associated with a beneficiary group associated with a user”. Dunworth et al. is admittedly directed to a system which can search for information, wherein some of the information can be based on geography. However, in Dunworth et al. there is no teaching or suggestion of associating both a user and at least one provider with a beneficiary group.

The fact that Dunworth et al provides a user with a list of geographical areas as alleged by the Examiner, has nothing to do with “a beneficiary group” as claimed. In Dunworth et al., a user may be able to find a location close to his home wherein a particular good or service is sold for example; but that won’t allow him to find someone associated with a beneficiary group such as the Boy Scouts of America, the Korean Methodist Church, or any other entity that a user

wants to benefit when making a particular purchase, for example.

In the present application, as set forth in some of the dependent claims of the present application for example, geography can be used as part of a search request to limit a particular search, or it can be used to expand a search if user is not satisfied with the number of hits originally obtained for example. However, the claims of the present application, especially the independent claims, are not limited or are not directed to geographic searching. Claim 1, for example, is directed to associating user with a beneficiary group and then providing an arrangement for searching for a provider, wherein the provider is associated with the beneficiary group associated with the user. Geography does not need to play any part in such an arrangement as a user need not be restricted in anyway by any geographical limitations.

For example, if a user wants to associate himself with the Boy Scouts of America, and wants to find a provider who sells digital cameras and who is also associated with the Boy Scouts of America, the user can do so and can eventually buy from such a provider irrespective of the geographic location of the provider, via the Internet for example. Accordingly, for at least such reasons, Applicants respectfully submit that independent claim 1 of the present application is allowable over Dunworth et al.

Similarly, independent claim 22 is also allowable over Dunworth et al. in that it includes at least a step of searching for a requested provider associated with at least one beneficiary group, based upon a received search request including at least one user-specified beneficiary group. No such user-specified beneficiary group or provider associated with a beneficiary group is taught or suggested by Dunworth et al. Accordingly, withdrawal of the rejection and allowance of independent claim 22 is also respectfully requested.

Somewhat similarly, each of independent claims 36, 45, 52, 61, and 71 are allowable

over Dunworth et al. in that they each include some type of user and provider associated with a beneficiary group (noting that each of these claims should be interpreted differently from one another, based only upon limitations present therein). As no such teaching or suggestion of a beneficiary group is present in Dunworth et al., allowance of each of these independent claims and withdrawal of the Examiner's prior art rejection is respectfully requested.

Finally, with regard to each of the various dependent claims, these claims are allowable for at least additional limitations set forth therein, and for at least the reasons previously set forth regarding their corresponding independent claims. Thus, withdrawal of the Examiner's rejection of each of claims 1-93 and allowance of these claims in connection with the present application is earnestly solicited.

New Claims

Applicants submit herewith new claims 94-137, in an effort to provide further protection for Applicants' invention. No new matter has been added in connection with the addition of these new claims. New independent method claims 94 and 110 are directed to methods which require "a beneficiary group", and thus are directed to methods not taught or suggested by any of the references of record, including Dunworth et al. With regard to each of the various newly added dependent claims, these claims are allowable for at least additional limitations set forth therein, and for at least the reasons previously set forth regarding their corresponding independent claims. An early indication of the allowability of these claims, and indeed each of claims 1-137 in connection with the present application, is earnestly solicited.

CONCLUSION

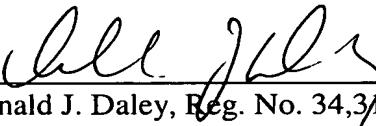
Accordingly, in view of the above remarks, reconsideration and withdrawal of all outstanding rejections and allowance of each of claims 1-137 in connection with the present application is earnestly solicited.

Should there be any outstanding matters that need to be resolved in the present application, the Examiner is respectfully requested to contact Donald J. Daley at the telephone number of the undersigned below.

If necessary, the Commissioner is hereby authorized in this, concurrent, and future replies, to charge payment or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 08-0750 for any additional fees required under 37 C.F.R. § 1.16 or under 37 C.F.R. § 1.17; particularly, extension of time fees.

Respectfully submitted,

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